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Colonel Disputes CBS Documentary at Libel Trial

By M. A. FARBER

A top military intelligence officer in Vietnam testified yesterday that CBS was wrong when it reported he was "fired" in 1967 because he wanted to report higher North Vietnamese infiltration than the official rate.

Lieut. Col. Everette S. Parkins, the ninth witness for General William C. Westmoreland in his \$120 million libel suit against CBS over a 1982 documentary, said he was relieved of his duties after a final run-in with a superior, Col. Charles A. Morris, whom he "disliked intensely" and who "more than reciprocated" the feeling.

Colonel Parkins — who said the incident that CBS cited was touched off by his decision to use his unit's jeep to go to the PX — testified that, as far as he knew, the infiltration of North Vietnamese into South Vietnam in the fall of 1967 was no more than the officially reported 6,000 to 8,000 a month.

Played Outtakes for Jury

Just after the colonel completed his testimony in Federal Court, lawyers for General Westmoreland played for the jury "outtakes," or unused portions, of a 1981 interview CBS conducted with of Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham prior to the broadcast of its documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception."

In 1967, General Graham was a lieutenant colonel in Vietnam in charge of estimating enemy strength. He later became head of the Defense Intelligence Agency before his retirement in 1976. In the unused portion of the 1981 interview, General Graham ridiculed as "preposterous" the charges CBS would later air about a military "conspiracy" to understate the size of the enemy.

After the outtakes were shown, General Graham took the stand. Anthony S. Murry, a lawyer for General Westmoreland, began by asking General Graham how many stars were worn by a lieutenant general.

"Six," replied General Graham, pausing. "Three on each shoulder."

The courtroom crowd — including, by this definition, the eight-star plaintiff — broke into laughter.

Dispute on Order of Battle

General Graham, whose testimony will continue today, said that when he arrived in Vietnam in August 1967, he concluded that the number of Vietcong guerrillas and other irregulars was being overstated. At the same time, he said, some analysts at the Central In-

telligence Agency wanted to include in the total enemy strength civilians "who washed socks for the Vietcong or carried rice for them."

These people, he said, did not belong in the official listing of enemy forces known as the order of battle.

The thesis of the documentary — spelled out at its start by the narrator, Mike Wallace — was that United States military intelligence officers "at the highest levels" had engaged in a "conscious effort" to "alter and suppress critical intelligence on the enemy in the year leading up to the Tet offensive" on January 31, 1968.

Mr. Wallace said the effect of this "conspiracy" was to leave President Johnson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the United States armed forces and the American public "totally unprepared" for the size of the offensive.

As part of the conspiracy, Mr. Wallace said, General Westmoreland's command "systematically blocked" reports from officers that infiltration of North Vietnamese into South Vietnam between September and December 1967 was as high as 25,000 a month.

Russell Cooley, a colonel who served in Vietnam at the time, is shown on the broadcast identifying General Graham as "the keystone behind this" suppression.

Colonel Cooley also said on the program that Colonel Parkins was "fired" because of his efforts to make known the higher infiltration rate. Colonel Cooley said on the broadcast: The "message became very clear. You — if you're going to go the extent of being that forceful — you'll just be removed from the job."

Appeared for 21 Seconds

General Graham appeared on the 90-minute program for a total of 21 seconds, denying that he or anyone else had "blocked" any infiltration reports. "I'm not that dumb," he said.

He also denied a charge by Comdr. James Meacham that, after the Tet offensive, he had ordered officers to "tamper" with computer data on enemy strength as part of a cover-up.

In the portions of his interview that were not shown, General Graham elaborated on the reasons why such an order "doesn't make any sense." He said, too, that his superior, Maj. General Phillip B. Davidson Jr., would have hanged "me from the nearest yardarm for trying to screw up the computers."

General Graham, in the outtakes, mocked the idea that he would have interfered with infiltration reports. "For an intelligence guy to say there's a division coming down and I'm not going to tell you guys about it back in Washington, that would have been ... that's preposterous."

Massing for Attack

The general told Mr. Wallace that at the end of 1967, several divisions of North Vietnamese were massing for an attack on Khe Sanh, an American base in northern South Vietnam. But information about the movement of those troops was fully reported.

"Hell," he said, "everybody in the world knew."

General Graham also said in the outtakes that he was unaware of any incident involving Colonel Parkins but that he "doubted" he had been dismissed for the reason stated by Mr. Wallace.

Yesterday, Mr. Murry asked Colonel Parkins whether he had ever submitted a report on enemy infiltration with a figure as high as 25,000.

A. No, I did not.

Q. Is Mr. Wallace's statement true or false?

A. I believe that statement is false.

Colonel Parkins said he had told "essentially the same thing" to CBS before its broadcast.

Q. When you were in Vietnam, was there ever a limit placed on the figures you could report?

A. There was not.

Q. Were you ever asked to falsify any figures?

A. I was not.

Colonel Parkins, a 1951 graduate of West Point who served more than 20 years in the Army, said that on an occasion in late 1967 he had departed from custom and hand-delivered a report on some aspect of enemy strength to military intelligence headquarters in Saigon. He said he took on the role of "messenger," he said, to justify his use of the jeep, which he then drove on to the PX.

Colonel Parkins said that, while he was at headquarters, he fell into another in a long series of heated disputes with Colonel Morris. Colonel Parkins said the arguments with Colonel Morris were the result of "a personality clash."

Soon after this episode, he said, he was relieved of his duties. He left Vietnam in a matter of months. Colonel Morris testified earlier in the trial that Colonel Parkins had been "fired" for refusing to "obey a legal order" to investigate a new method of counting the enemy.

On cross-examination, David Boies, a lawyer for CBS, referred to an affidavit that Colonel Parkins had signed in 1983, saying that the argument with Colonel Morris was over enemy strength figures that Colonel Parkins had included in the report he delivered.

Colonel Parkins said the affidavit told "only part of the story" and that he couldn't remember exactly what figures were in his report or precisely what had "inflamed" his superior.